“The Role of Diaspora during and after Crisis Situations”

Side Event to the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment
25 June 2014, 8.15 – 9.30 AM, Conference Room 7 (NLB), UN Headquarters, New York

Concept Note

Moderator: Ms. Christelle Loupforest, Head of the IASC/ECHA Secretariat, OCHA
Speakers: Mr. Hassan Ali Warsame, Senior Advisor to the Somali Government, Office of the Prime Minister
Ms. Katleen Felix, President of the Haitian Hometown Associations Resource Group
Mr. Gervais Appave, Special Policy Advisor to the Director General, IOM

Countries affected by civil war, armed conflict, natural disasters or other crises are faced with the difficult task of rebuilding the physical and social infrastructures that are essential to reinstating stability in their societies. Diaspora and transnational communities have played a significant role in efforts to rebuild and strengthen government and civil society institutions and response in crisis and post-crisis contexts.

In 2013, IOM hosted the Diaspora Ministerial Conference (DMC) – the first global conference on diaspora – which identified ways to engage, enable and empower diaspora communities; gathered recommendations for diaspora-related policy, research and operations; and fostered productive networks between countries of origin and destination as well as civil societies.

One of the key outcomes of this conference was highlighting the active role of transnational communities in not only providing development assistance but also responding to disasters and humanitarian crises by delivering urgent financial aid and resources. Although crises can interrupt normal, cross-border remittance flows, they can also trigger financial flows and charitable contributions. In addition, diaspora have the potential to reinvigorate and fuel economic development in post-crisis environments. They may be better positioned to negotiate risk and be the first to invest in post-conflict reconstruction.

It has been recognized that diaspora groups can be influential agents in peace making and peace-building (e.g. inter-community dialogue and out of country voting), and transitional justice processes (e.g. reconciliation, truth and reparations). While the role of the diaspora in crises can be beneficial, it can also raise some political concerns.

As this issue has become increasingly referred to in the humanitarian context, this event intends to examine the potential roles of diaspora groups to strengthen humanitarian action. It therefore aims to provide recommendations on:

- The extent to which diaspora communities can or should be engaged in humanitarian response, both during natural disasters and conflict;
- How diaspora communities can be effective in ensuring that humanitarian action is meeting humanitarian needs, both during natural disasters and conflict, upholding humanitarian principles.